



SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE

Working for strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska

January 7, 2008
Mr. Eric Taylor, Project Manager
DOT&PF, Division of Program Development
P.O. Box 112500
Juneau, Alaska 99801-2500

Re: Comments of Draft Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan

Dear Mr. Taylor,

Thank you for attending our Transportation Committee Meeting in December and giving us a better understanding of Alaska's Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan *"2030 Let's Get Moving"*. We also want to thank you for the opportunity to comment further on the plan.

Port and Harbor Facilities

We would like to stress the importance of including port and harbor facilities infrastructure as one of the Strategic System Development Goals. The SWLRTPP does not mention State ownership or responsibility for port and harbor maintenance let alone improvements. The State of Alaska owns 36 harbors located in all three regions of Alaska. Alaska's coastline is immense when compared to the rest of the country. Nearly all of the supplies are brought into Alaska via marine transportation and nearly all of our exports are shipped to domestic and international market via marine transportation. In most of the Southeast communities, marine transportation is the sole means of getting supplies in and goods out of the community. It is very clear the State relies heavily on its ports and harbors and without them Southeast Alaska would not exist. Page 38 a short paragraph basically says there is no State program for ports and harbors and there is no annual state program for construction or upgrade of ports and harbors. There is an ongoing Harbor Differed Maintenance Program and also a Harbor Matching Grant Program that is, we believe, run through DOT&PF. These programs have not adequately addressed the needs of ports and harbors of coastal Alaska and much more needs to be done. This is a very critical aspect of our transportation infrastructure and must have more attention in the long-range plan than one incorrect paragraph.

- We believe that waterfront development must be a part of the SWLRTPP and that the adoption of the plan should not be implemented until more work is done regarding the ports and harbors infrastructure. Southeast Conference has been consistent with this message by adoption of Resolution 08-08, passed September 20, 2007 at its Annual Meeting in Skagway, Alaska.

Inclusion of Other Partners

Southeast Conference recognizes the importance of the alternative transportation partners that complement the AMHS and would like to see them recognized in the plan. For example, Inter-Island Ferry Authority is a transportation service that connects and complements the marine service in Southeast Alaska. There are many other partners that could benefit from being part of the plan as a system of the whole region. This will allow the State and Federal governments to coordinate with the auxiliary transportation links, and recognize the value of partnerships. As

many of our communities develop other transportation corridors it will become more important to have an avenue for these alternative companies to be part of the long-range plan and system.

- Include alternative transportation partners in the plan and allow for inclusion of future partners as we look for innovative approaches to develop our transportation links.

Equate Ferries with Roads

The Alaska Marine Highway System and its associated transportation partners need to have equal priority along with roads in our long-range plan. Marine transportation provides nearly all of our supplies and exports. Many regions of the State will always be dependent on marine transportation. Downgrading it as a priority is a disservice to the people of Alaska and especially its coastal communities.

- Page 26, action Plan 1.2 **Continue the modernization of NHS** - The first sentence should read: While important to our state, our project focused planning has tended to address community needs and not the road and **ferry** connections between the communities.
- Page 38, **operating costs**, should read: have seen substantial increases due to fuel and labor expenditures.
- Page 37 under **Alaska's highways and bridges** the sentence: "These roads form the core network for the state." Should read: These roads and **associated marine transportation links** form the core network for the state.
- As stated on page 45, Alaska has neither taxes nor highway user fees dedicated to transportation needs. We encourage the Department of Transportation and the State of Alaska to research more state funding and a program for user fees dedicated to transportation improvements and maintenance.
- Page 58 under **Alaska Marine Highway System: System Development Needs**, it states that no new vessels are planned through 2030. The text should be corrected to state that the state is planning for a Southeast Shuttle that will be critical to day boat service in Northern Southeast and would also be a critical component of a Juneau Road if it is ever built. The road itself requires new vessels for its ferry component from the Katzehein to Haines and Skagway. This section should also recognize that the Gateway Shuttle is in the pre design stages.

Need for Airport Priorities

Southeast Conference would like to encourage DOT to add to the **Strategic Goals and Priorities for System Development – ADOT&PF Airports: Goal 4: Maintain and upgrade Aviation Infrastructure**. Alaska's rural airports are of utmost importance to the well being of those communities. It should be a concern to maintain and upgrade gravel strips, seaplane facilities and other rural airports infrastructure. With the growing development of electronics and communication systems in smaller aircraft it is going to become even more important to keep up with aviation communication on the ground as well. It is to the benefit of these smaller airport facilities that they are able to have improved data gathering to accurately record usage for funding benefits.

Enclosed with this comment letter are a copy of our Resolution 08-08 and a letter requesting the comment period be extended. We believe that unless the above-mentioned issues are addressed the SWTRLPP does not adequately reflect the needs of our region or other regions of the State of Alaska.

Thank you for allowing us to participate in this public process. If you have any questions please contact our office at (907) 523-2327.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jon Bolling".

Jon Bolling
Board President

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Shelly Wright".

Shelly Wright
Executive Director

**A RESOLUTION OF SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE SUPPORTING
INCLUDING PORTS AND HARBORS INFRASTRUCTURE AS PART OF THE
STATEWIDE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Resolution 08-08

WHEREAS, it seems ports and harbors infrastructure has been ignored and we believe it plays a major role in Alaska's transportation development; and

WHEREAS, the economies of Southeast Alaska are dependent on marine transportation and its associated docks and harbors, and

WHEREAS, the Gulf of Alaska, Prince William Sound, Southwest Alaska, Bering Sea associated infrastructure, and

WHEREAS, port facilities linking the interior by road and rail deliver fuel, building materials, seafood, groceries, heavy equipment, etc. and in return receive raw materials for transshipment to market, and

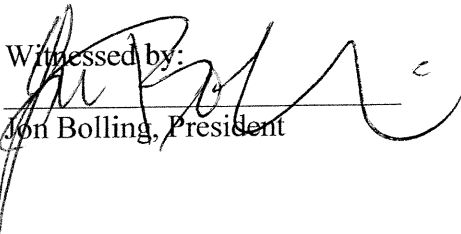
WHEREAS, water front development is vital to Alaska and the State of Alaska needs to put it right up with surface transportation as a priority in long range planning, and

WHEREAS, we encourage the State of Alaska to make port development a priority to the STIP and DOT long range planning process and support the underfunded harbor matching grant program.

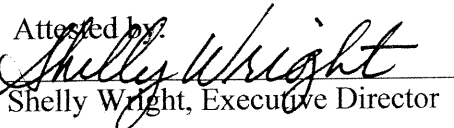
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, Southeast Conference requests ports and harbors infrastructure be included in the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. It is the link between our marine highways, which moves goods and people, and our hard surface transportation (roads, rail), which do the same.

**THIS RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED BY SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE
MEMBERSHIP SEPTEMBER 20, 2007.**

Witnessed by:


Jon Bolling, President

Attested by:


Shelly Wright, Executive Director



Southeast Conference



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Dear Mr. Taylor;

The Southeast Conference Board of Directors and its associated transportation committee would like to formally request a 20 to 30 day extension of the comment period for the Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan.

There have been many issues raised concerning the plan and it is our belief that these issues merit further review before such an important document is adopted.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation for a presentation on the plan to the Southeast Conference Board and Southeast Conference Transportation Committee on Dec. 19th, 2007 at 9:00 am.

The SWLRTPP will be the guide for statewide transportation issues through 2030 and it is of extreme importance that it is done thoroughly and with adequate public participation. Southeast Conference would like to help with that process, transportation is vital to our region's people and economy.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jon Bolling, Board President
Southeast Conference

Cc
Governor Sarah Palin
Commissioner von Scheben
Deputy Commissioner Hardy
Special Assistant Randy Ruaro
Senator Stedman
Senator Kookesh
Senator Elton
Representative Doll
Representative Kerttula
Representative Wilson
Representative Thomas
Representative Johansen